

"I draw the line at raising the sheep. I had an angora goat once. It was a big problem, and I said 'Never again.'"

~ Phyllis Packard

Dakota and Yankton College.

She also took part in the South Dakota Artists in Schools & Communities program, which involved traveling to locations throughout the state to teach students and citizens about their specific craft – and depending on the length of time spent in a community, assist with a project.

"It was everything from a day, a week, a month, to six months in Winner, S.D.," she said.

One of Packard's most memorable stops was at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield.

"That was fascinating," she said. "They had a program called the Black Sheep Weavers – the inmates named it. ... They were weaving tapestries."

Packard hopes to take up teaching again, with spinning classes tentatively scheduled for Thursday afternoons, beginning in mid-January.

Further information can be acquired by calling LumoStudios & Gallery at 624-9222.

Although she continued to work with wool, Packard worked as solid waste management director for the cities of Vermillion and Yankton for 17 years. She now serves as a member of the Clay

County Commission, which provides her with more time to devote to her true passion.

"I can spin about two and a half ounces an hour," she said. "So, that's about five hours just to do a ball of yarn. And, that's not counting the time combing, cleaning, washing and dyeing. There's quite a bit of time involved. ...

"I comb it, I spin it and it still has all the oils," she said. "In order to dye it, and in order to sell it on the rack, I do wash it after I spin it, which takes out some of the oils and a lot of the dirt that is left."

If the wool is to be dyed, it also requires immersion in a mordant bath, which will make the colors adhere.

"It can take days to go through even just one process of color," Packard said.

Much of the wool Packard uses she acquired through her government connections.

"The solid waste director in Brookings retired about eight, 10 months after I did. He raises sheep," she said.

Packard added she did purchase finished yarn to dye, "but I'm not as enamored of dyeing the bought yarn. I want it to be mine."

She likes to be involved in the whole process, she said.

"I do draw the line at raising the sheep," she said. "I had an angora goat once. It was a big problem, and I said, 'Never again.'"

It's the other processes in which she takes more interest – and pleasure.

"To be able to take a project all the way from the raw material to the finished product is very satisfying," she said.

■ *by Travis Gulbrandson*
Vermillion Plain Talk

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